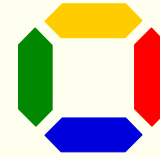




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Institutional Climate in Forensic Mental Hospitals - Development of an Assessment Questionnaire

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Ward Atmosphere

The interaction of aspects of the material, social, and emotional conditions of a ward, which may - over time - influence the mood, behaviour, and self concept of the persons involved.

An old idea in psychiatric research is that there might be an important relationship between the social atmosphere in a psychiatric treatment unit and the results of the treatment.

Jansson & Eklund 2002

The concept of 'ward atmosphere' seems to have lost some scientific attention in recent years due to a strong focus on biological aspects of behaviour and on individual risk assessment in modern (forensic) psychiatry.

Hits in a Google research (June 2005):

"Ward climate"	91
"Ward atmosphere"	835
"Offender Risk Assessment"	5.370
Psychopathy	101.000

Climate-Traits measured by the Ward-Atmosphere-Scale (Moos & Houts 1968)

Relationship Dimensions

involvement

support

spontaneity

Personal Growth Dimensions

autonomy

practical orientation

anger and aggression

personal problem orientation

System Maintenance Orientation

order and organization

program clarity

staff control

10 items to each subscale!

Questions with regard to the WAS-concept

Research using factor analysis regularly found that a social environment can be described sufficiently on 3 to maximum 5 factorial dimensions.

Rossberg & Friis (2003): Unsatisfying discriminative validity.

Steffan Davies (Nottingham): “too long and cumbersome”

Research in forensic mental hospitals frequently addresses patients with little formal education and limited intellectual capacity.

- Long questionnaires cause “missing data”.
- Items must be phrased simply and clearly.

First Version of a short Ward Climate Questionnaire
(Schalast 1995)

⇒ focus of project: Staff, job stress and satisfaction

Climate traits:

Experienced Safety (vs. threat of violence)

Experienced Success in therapeutic work

Atmosphere of the living environment

Intended enlarged version of a Climate Questionnaire
(Schalast 2000)

⇒ focus of project : patients' treatment motivation

Safety

Living Environment

Experienced Success in therapeutic work

- **Patients' Cohesion**
- **Holding Function (therapeutic support)**
- **“Staff Control”**

**'Final' version of a short assessment tool for the
Ward Atmosphere in forensic psychiatry**

Experienced Safety (vs. threat of violence)

Patients' Cohesion and mutual Support

Therapeutic Hold and Support

5 items per dimension

Safety

(Experience of Safety vs. Threat of Violence)

Some patients are so excitable that one deals very cautiously with them.

Really threatening situations can occur here.

Staff members are afraid of some of the patients.

There are some really aggressive patients on this ward.

Some patients are afraid of other patients.

Cronbach-Alpha for patients: 0.76 for staff: 0.79

Patients' Cohesion and mutual Support.

The patients care for each other.

Even the weakest patient finds support from his fellow patients.

There is good peer support among patients

Patients care about their fellow patients' problems.

When a patient has a genuine concern, he finds support from his fellow patients.

Cronbach-Alpha for patients: 0.80 for staff: 0.76

Therapeutic Hold and Support

Staff members take a lot of time to deal with patients.

Often, staff seem not to care if patients succeed or fail in treatment.

On this ward, patients can openly talk to staff about all their problems.

Staff take a personal interest in the progress of patients.

Staff know patients and their personal histories very well.

Cronbach-Alpha for patients: 0.86 for staff: 0.73

Sample for testing the final version of the climate questionnaire (2004)

17 hospitals

46 wards

- 25 treating mentally ill offenders (Art. 63 of the German penal code)
- 21 treating addicted offenders (Art. 64 GPC)

n = 333 employees n = 327 patients

Findings supporting validity

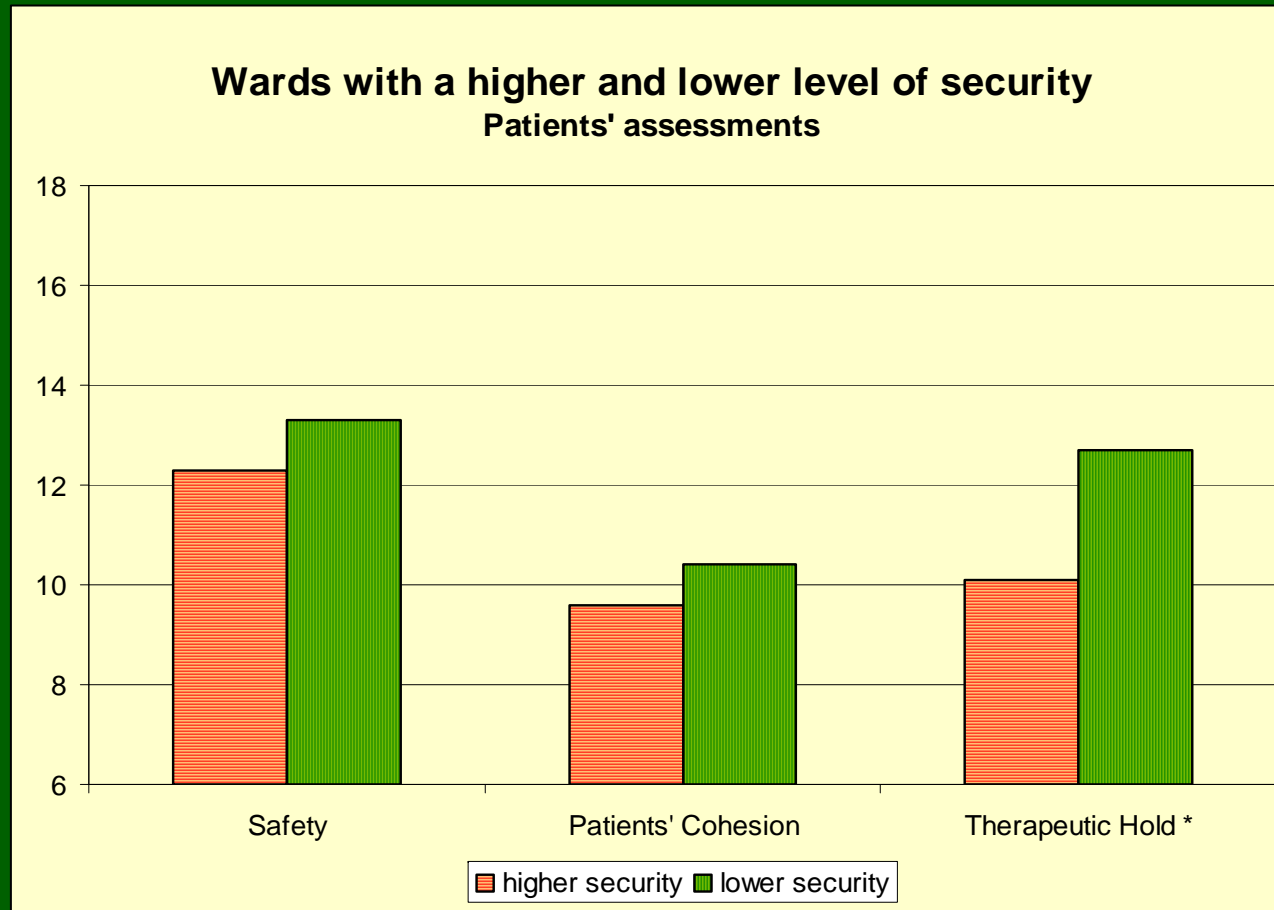
Robust factor structure in different subgroups of the sample.

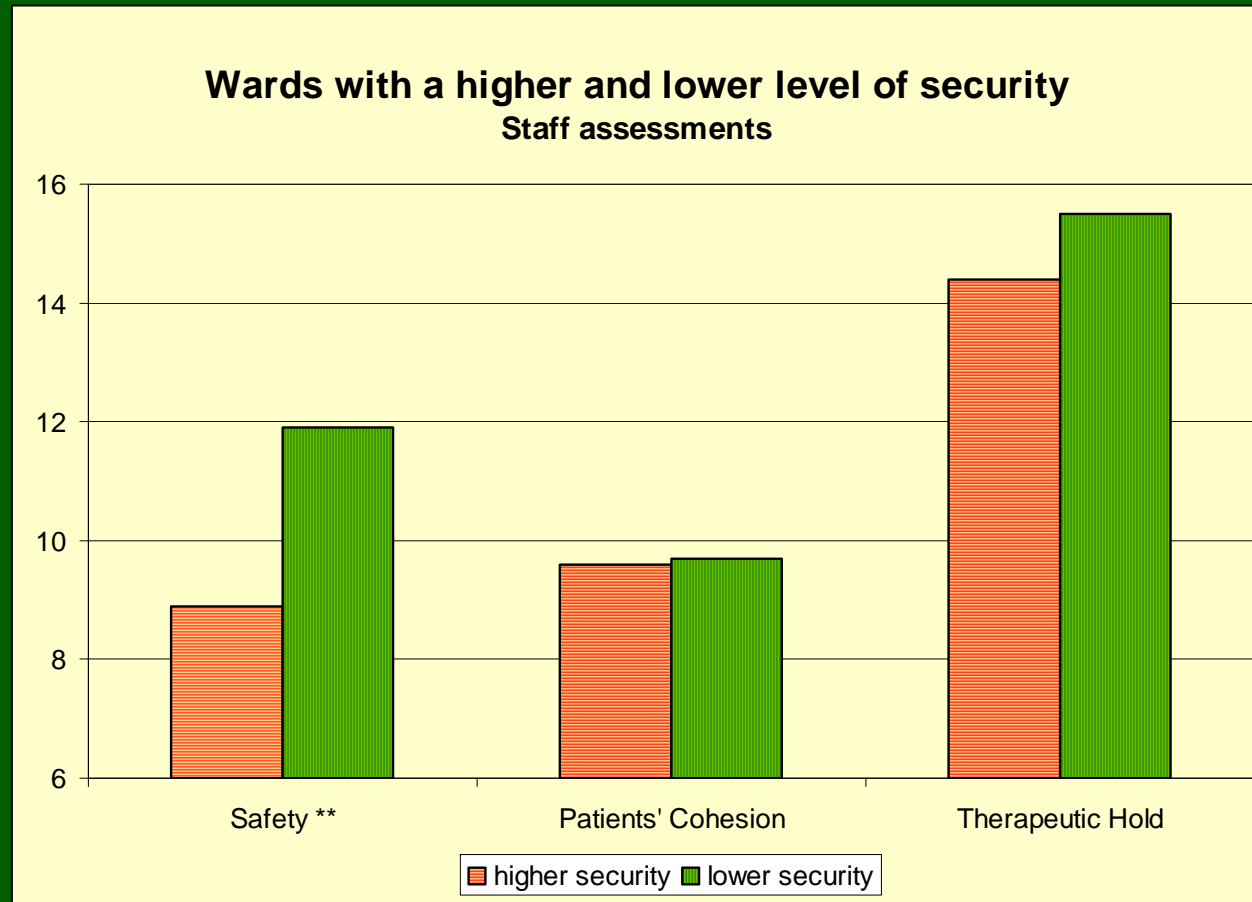
„Therapeutic Hold“ and „Patients‘ Cohesion and Support“ correlate clearly with scales of other questionnaires assessing ward climate or patients‘ experiences in treatment.

No strong correlation with job satisfaction.

„Safety“ correlates (esp. among staff) clearly with the frequency of problem events (daily hassle): $r = - 0.62$!

Climate scores are more favourable on wards with less restrictions (security).





Correlation of average climate assessments
by patients and staff on 46 wards.

Staff Assessments

Patients' Assessments

	Therapeutic Hold	Safety	Patients' Cohesion
Therapeutic Hold	.53	.21	.35
Safety	.39	.42	.22
Patients' Cohesion	.20	.13	.59

Summary

A screening tool for assessing the social and therapeutic climate of forensic psychiatric wards was presented. Data from 46 wards demonstrate a stable trait structure and good validity of the German version of the instrument.

Three climate dimensions reflect basic needs of a patient in a forensic setting and seem of high relevance for staff too:

Experienced Safety (vs. threat of aggression and violence)

Patients' cohesion and mutual support

Therapeutic Hold.

The questionnaire has been translated thoroughly into a number of languages (see www.forensik-essen.de).



Danke für Ihre
Aufmerksamkeit!